

Every Child Learning Every Day



December 2003

An early childhood newsletter from the State Department of Education

Volume 2, Issue 12

READY TO LEARN

Get into holiday spirit with these books

By Dr. Stan Steiner

Books make a perfect gift for this holiday season. Everyone benefits from hearing the stories and the act of reading begins a process for creating a legacy of readers.

"Jan Brett's Little Library," 1989/1997/1999, Penguin Putnam. Three favorites make up this boxed set of board books. Included are "The Mitten," "The Hat," and "Gingerbread Baby."



"Santa's Surprise," by Jonathan Lambert and Keith Faulkner, 2003, Dial Books. Santa's got a serious but solvable problem in this engaging pop-up book. A splash of humor, wonderful artwork and the curious will turn this book into one that demands repeated readings.

"A Christmas Stocking Story," by Hilary Knight, 1963/2003, HarperCollins. Playful rhyming text unravels the mysterious mix-up of the Christmas stockings. In rollicking style, the neighborly animals find a way to do some creative trading to please everyone's style.

"Who'll Pull Santa's Sleigh Tonight?," by Laura Rader, 2003, HarperCollins. What would you do if you were dependent on reindeer to pull your sleigh and they were all sick in bed with a cold? The remedy is a surprise, thanks to Mrs. Claus. Recipe included.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" by Charles Rea-soner, 2003, Price Stern Sloan. Two fun board books with rhyming text and bright sparkly covers are sure to capture the anticipation of the holiday season.

Dr. Stan Steiner teaches Children's Literature at Boise State University. Find more book reviews at <http://education.boisestate.edu/ssteine>.

Growing roots through traditions

Dear Reader:

The holiday season is special time in the lives of families. Activities from dinners to concerts to social gatherings disrupt our "normal" schedules in our homes.

These annual cultural and religious events and their associated activities are called "rituals" by experts, and research shows that these traditions are important to the well being of children, and to adults.

These annual events help us create a sense of who we are and what we value. They are essential to developing character in our children.

Research also shows that routines and rituals provide stability for families during stressful times.

Family rituals don't have to be limited just to holidays.

In fact, experts recommend that we create frequent rituals that are pre-



Dr. Marilyn Howard
Superintendent of Public
Instruction

dictable and meaningful for the children in our lives.

Some suggestions:

**Eat meals together as a family at least two to three

times a week;

**Create a bedtime routine for your child that includes interaction with parents such as reading stories or singing songs;

**Take family vacations;

**Celebrate birthdays and anniversaries;

**Establish a day each month for turning off the television and doing activities as a family.

The important part of all these rituals is not the perfect dinner table or birthday cake, but rather the time spent together.

Our rituals provide the time in our busy lives to share experiences, values and stories that will help grow the roots that anchor our children as they grow into adulthood.

Best wishes to you and your families in your celebrations now and throughout the year.

READY TO LEARN

Creating menus, planning party build skills

Planning a party is a great opportunity to help build early literacy skills in young children, and December is a great time for special events.

Young children can help build menus and create shopping lists.

Supplies needed to produce party menus: paper, glue stick, pictures of food cut out of magazines or boxes with labels of favorite party foods, crayons or markers, and names of the different foods on sticky labels.

Below are some menu related activities:

**Talk about the purpose of a menu, for example: "We need to decide what we can eat and drink at our party." If you can't have a party, choose a meal for the children to make menus.

**Lay out the pictures or labels of the food. Have the child or children pick out a few pictures, talking to them about nutritional choice as well as



identifying favorites.

**Write MENU at the top of each page. Have the children glue the pictures/

labels of the selected foods down the left side of the page. Help the children find the name of each food and paste it next to the picture.

**Read the menu with the children.

**Plan a shopping trip to the store and take the menu as a grocery list. Assist the child or children to help find the foods using the label or picture, show the children the signs above the rows that can help you find things in the store. This is a great way to show children that print is everywhere.

**Prepare the foods for the party.

LET IT SNOW!

"Snow," by Uri Schulevitz. No one except a small boy thinks the few falling snowflakes will amount to much. As the snow continues to fall, however, the dull, gray town becomes transformed into a winter wonderland, and all of its residents come out to enjoy.

"Snowflake Bentley," by Jacqueline Briggs Martin. This biography tells the true story of a Vermont farm boy who was mesmerized by snowflakes. Wilson Bentley saw snowflakes as small miracles, and he became determined to one day use his camera to capture for others the wonder of the tiny crystal.

"The Snowman," by Raymond Briggs. A little boy makes friends with a snowman. He wakes up on a snowy day, tells his mother he's going outside, then begins a flurry of snowman building. That night, he can't sleep, so he opens the front door and the snowman has come to life.



RESOURCES

Tips on the right toys for tiny tots

From www.cpsc.gov

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and Kmart are teaming up to provide the public and parents tips to keep the kids safe, and to make the holiday shopping a little easier. Below are their tips for buying appropriate and safe toys for young children.

Younger than 3 years old

****Children younger than age 3** tend to put everything in their mouths. Avoid buying toys intended for older children, which may have small parts that pose a choking danger.

****Never** let children of any age play with uninflated or broken balloons because of the choking danger.

****Avoid** marbles, balls, and games with balls that have a diameter of 1.75 inches or less. These products also pose a choking hazard to young children.

****Children** at this age pull, prod and twist toys. Look for toys that are well made with tightly secured eyes, noses and other parts.

****Avoid** toys that have sharp edges and points.

Ages 3 through 5

****Avoid** toys that are constructed with thin, brittle plastic that might easily break into small pieces or leave jagged edges.

****Look** for household art materials, including crayons and paint sets, marked with the designation "ASTM D-4236." This means the product has been reviewed by a toxicologist and, if necessary, labeled with cautionary information.

****Teach** older children to keep their toys away from younger children.

Age 6 through 12

****For** all children, adults should check toys periodically for breakage and potential hazards. Damaged or dangerous toys should be repaired or thrown away.

****If** buying a toy gun, be sure the barrel, or the entire gun, is brightly colored so that it's not mistaken for a real gun.

****If** you buy a bicycle for any age child, buy a helmet too, and make sure the child wears it.

NUTRITION

Try some new foods in the new year

Enjoy all kinds of foods! That's good advice for kids – and for you. Why? When kids learn to enjoy many

foods, they have more choices for smart eating throughout life. That's good because different foods promote growth and health in different ways.

Food variety makes eating more interesting and fun, too. Remember: seeing, trying, comparing, and talking about different foods is part of learning.

Good feelings about trying

new foods help lead to a lifetime of healthful eating. Try new fruits and vegetables as fun experiences with your child.

• Offer a new food first, before foods your child eats already. Kids usually are more willing to try new foods when they are hungry.

• Have your child choose a new food as you shop. Trying new foods is more fun for kids when they pick them.

• Do a taste test. Talk about a new food. Have your child describe the color, shape, feel, smell, sound, and taste – and not whether your child likes or dislikes it. No "yucks"!

• Go for at least "one bite." But stay away from forcing your child to taste. Keep food trying positive.

• Try new foods, too. Encourage your whole family to try new foods! Kids copy what they see and hear. Keep quiet if you don't like the food.

• Prepare new foods in different ways. Many kids prefer to pick up raw vegetables with fingers.

That may seem better than the same new vegetable that is cooked.

• Try and try again. Many kids need to try a new food 5 to 10 times before they like it. It's normal for kids to be cautious at first.



READY TO LEARN

Mixing colors, music make lively lessons

Submitted by preschool teacher Debbie Haren to atozteachertstuff.com/

This "Music Walk" activity aims to help children learn colors while walking in a circle to music.

Materials needed: CD or cassette of slow to moderately fast music, CD or cassette tape player, adhesive tape, pieces of construction paper of different colors, enough for each child to have a piece of paper to stand on.

Activity: *Part 1* -- Tape colored construction paper to the floor where you are going to play the songs. Put down enough construction paper for every student to have a color to stand on. You can

have more than one student on the same color, just not the same piece of construction paper. For example, you can have three kids on three pieces of blue construction paper.

Part 2 -- Explain to the students that when the music stops they are to stay on that color of paper. After the music is turned off, the teacher will select a color and ask who is standing on the color (for example blue), then those students say their names.

Part 3: -- If desired, you can have all students win a prize when their color is called or have every one play until his or her color is called and then a prize is given. This would be a good activity at a festival or celebration such as a birthday party.

ACTIVITIES

Kids' gifts make for treasured keepsakes

From <http://daycare.about.com/>

Some of the most treasured gifts are those made and given by young children. Below are some easy to make gifts that preschool children can make for their parents, grandparents, or caregivers this holiday season.

Craft Stick Frame

Popsicle sticks or tongue depressors can be glued to form a simple frame. Finished frames can be left plain, painted or decorated with tissue paper, glitter and fabric scraps. Add a photo or the child's art work.

Cute as a Button Photo Frame

You can start with a cheap frame or make one from sturdy cardboard or craft sticks. Attach the lettering "I am cute as a button!" to the top of the frame

and allow children to choose from a variety of small buttons to glue around the frame's edges.

Silhouette Picture

Tape a large sheet of white paper on the wall. Have child sit sideways on a chair three to four feet away from the wall. Shine a bright light on the child from a few feet behind them so their shadow is cast on the paper. A projector works well for this. Simply trace around the shadow.

You can do a full size body portrait by having the child lay down on a large strip of white butcher paper and tracing around the body. These look nice plain or decorated by the child.

Placemat

Save a cherished drawing or painting by mounting it onto hard cardboard and covering with laminate or clear contact paper.